

SPEAKING THE QUEEN'S ENGLISH

One of the biggest questions for a GM of a FIREBORN campaign is not “How did the mythic age *really* end?” or “How deeply do the Dwellers’ tendrils of influence reach into British government?” but rather, “Should my campaign encourage the use of British accents?”

While some FIREBORN players will be blessed with a British upbringing, the majority of us are at a disadvantage when it comes to speaking like a Brit or, more precisely, like a Londoner. You should probably encourage your players to try out the accent, and if it feels too silly or they can’t wrap their brains around it, let them switch to whatever their normal manner of speaking might be. For your NPCs, it’s really a matter of how effectively you think you can pull off a good brogue. The biggest advantage you have is that, even if your accent is atrocious, most of the players probably won’t know what a “good” accent sounds like any more than you do.

Regardless of your attempts to master the accent, it always helps set the mood to try to use the proper lingo. That’s why we’ve included this sampling of British slang.

RHYMING SLANG

One of the unique aspects of British slang is referred to as rhyming slang. It is a fairly convoluted form of slang, and it makes meaning nearly impossible to trace back unless you happen to be “in the know.” Rhyming slang replaces one word with an (often random) two-word phrase or compound word that rhymes; the actual rhyming half of the phrase or compound word is then removed, leaving one with an apparently unrelated slang term standing in for the original word. A common example of this is the rhyming slang for ‘mate,’ which is ‘china plate.’ The ‘plate’ half is removed, leaving ‘china’ as the slang term that is used. So ‘china’ means ‘mate’ by way of ‘china plate.’

LEXICON OF BRITISH SLANG

aggro — short for aggravation or violence, e.g. “He was completely **pissed** and well up for some aggro.”

apples and pears — stairs, e.g., “the body bounced all the way down the apples and pears.”

arseholed — drunk, e.g. “Me an’ Dave got totally arseholed last night.”

backhander — a payment given, usually for dubious purposes or illegally.

banged up — to be put in prison, e.g. “Did you hear, Benny got banged up last week after that blag.”

bell — a telephone call, e.g. “give us a bell later.”

bird — woman/girl/girlfriend; also from the rhyming slang ‘birdlime,’ ‘time,’ referring to a prison sentence, e.g. “He’s doing ‘is bird in Belmarsh.”

blag — robbery.

bloke — general term for a man of unknown name, e.g. “Look at that bloke over there.”

bollocks — bullshit, impossible, a lie.

bong — an impossibly hopeless situation, a catastrophe; an acronym for “bollocks, no good”

bottle — courage, balls, e.g. “he lost his bottle,” “he bottled out,” “he’s got a lot of bottle.”

bread — money. From the rhyming slang ‘bread and honey.’

brew — a cup of tea or sometimes a pint of beer, e.g. “Do you fancy a brew?”

brilliant — good, well-done, amazing, not necessarily having to do with intelligence, e.g., “That film was brilliant!” in reference to an action blockbuster.

bugger — a form of abuse or an exclamation, e.g. “You little bugger!” Other forms are:

bugger-all — nothing at all, e.g. “I’ve got bugger-all money left.”

bugger-off — to tell someone to go away or to leave quickly.

cakehole — mouth, e.g. “Shut your cakehole!”

charlie — slang for cocaine.

chief — general respectful term used to address a man, particularly a superior.

china — rhyming slang, short for ‘china plate,’ ‘mate.’ Used to address someone who is at least slightly familiar and typically prefixed by “me old.” e.g. “Awright me old china!”

clobber — clothes, e.g. “I’ve gotta go shopping for some new clobber.”

cor! — an expression of surprise.

cor blimey! — a variation of ‘gaw blimey’.

damage — cost, e.g. “what’s the damage?”

diamond geezer — a good, solid, reliable person.

dodgy — something or someone seems off, or that shouldn’t be trusted.

earner — a source of income (not usually honest), sometimes prefixed with “a nice little.”

(the) firm — a gang of “dodgy geezers.”

fag — cigarette.

footie — abbreviated form of football (soccer).

gaff — a house, e.g. “I’ll meet you round my gaff in half an hour,” or place, e.g. “She was all over the gaff” (all over the place).

gander — to look at, e.g. “lets ‘ave a gander.”

gaw blimey! — a corruption of the expression of surprise ‘God blind me!’

geezer — a common term for a man. Used respectfully and for a person of unknown name, e.g. “some geezer” or to say that someone is a bit of a laddish

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rogue, e.g. "he's a bit of a geezer." Also "dodgy geezer" can be used to describe a man of bad character.

git — mildly offensive word to refer to someone (a male) that is disliked.

go into one — to get annoyed or lose control, similar to "go off."

half inch — rhyming slang for 'pinch,' referring to stealing.

Hampstead — rhyming slang, short for 'Hampstead Heath,' 'teeth,' e.g. "Look at the Hampsteads on that bird!"

have some of that! — an exclamation used to express pleasure, usually after showing off at something, e.g. "After pinning a fleeing thug to a door with a well thrown knife, Dave the Diamond Geezer exclaimed, 'ave some of that!'"

Herbert — a foolish person or used as a mild form of abuse. Normally prefixed by "spotty," e.g. "Will ya look at that spotty Herbert!"

inside — in prison, e.g. "I've 'eard Will's inside again."

jar — pint of beer, e.g. "Fancy a few jars after work?"

John — used as a general term for a man whose name isn't known, e.g. "Awright John, watcha doin' 'ere?"

kip — a nap, or to take a nap.

knocking shop — a brothel.

laugh — a joke.

leave it out — a phrase meaning "stop doing that" or "stop saying that," often used in disbelief or as if to say "you must be joking," e.g. "Leave it out John! You're 'avin a laugh!"

loaf — rhyming slang, short for 'loaf of bread,' 'head,' e.g. "don't be stupid, use yer loaf!"

local — the local public house (pub or bar), e.g. "Yeah, I saw 'im down the local last night."

manor — territory, area, turf. Usually associated with the criminal underground, e.g. "If I see you round my manor again you're dead!"

mate — common form of address for both friends and strangers of unknown name, e.g. "Awright mate!" Also used when the person being spoken to is very much *not* a mate, e.g. "Oi mate, you looking at my bird!?"

merchant banker — rhyming slang for wanker.

nick — to steal; when preceded by 'the,' refers to a police station or prison, e.g. "He's been banged-up in the nick . . . again!"

not cricket — an old English saying. If something is not cricket, it means that "decent" people probably wouldn't approve of it. Usually used by youth in a mocking manner.

nutter — someone crazy or, more commonly, violent or foolishly daring, e.g. "You'd have to be a right nutter to start a fight in that place."

oily — rhyming slang for 'oily rag,' 'fag' (cigarette).

on the game — to be a prostitute, e.g., "She's had to get on the game to pay the rent."

Pete Tong — rhyming slang for 'wrong,' e.g. "It's all gone Pete Tong!"

pissed — unlike the American version of the word (which means "annoyed"), this is the most common slang term for being drunk. Other variants are "pissed-up," "pissed as arseholes," "pissed as a fart," "pissed as a newt," etc.

pub — short for public house, meaning a bar.

(in) queer street — to be in trouble or in a difficult situation.

right — total, completely, adamantly, e.g. "He's a right bastard!"

Rosa (or Rose) Lee — a cup of tea, e.g. "cor blimey I could go for a cup of Rosa Lee."

(do a) runner — leave an area (often the scene of a crime) unexpectedly, e.g. "Where's that bastard gone? I bet he's done a runner!"

Scooby — rhyming slang for 'Scooby-Do,' 'clue,' e.g. "I 'avn't a Scooby, mate."

shafted — to be treated badly, to be in trouble, e.g. "We're right shafted if we don't get out of this tunnel!"

sheets — monetary notes.

shrapnel — coins.

solid — reliable, dependable, e.g. "You don't have to worry about Colin, he's a solid bloke."

sussed or sussed out — found out, discovered, e.g. "The coppers 'ave sussed us, John!" or worked out all right, came together, e.g. "It all sussed out in the end."

taking a piss out — to fool, to play a joke at someone's expense, e.g., "Mason thought his mates were taking a piss out on 'im when they told him something was chasing them."

taters — rhyming slang for 'potatoes in the mould,' 'cold,' e.g. "It's taters out here, I need a new coat."

tea leaf — rhyming slang for thief, e.g. "He's a right tea leaf, that one."

tits-up — all gone wrong, e.g. "Aw shit, it's all gone tits-up!"

up for it — to be willing to have a good time or try something daring, e.g. "Are you up for it?" Also for someone (usually a woman) to be sexually available, e.g. "I reckon she's up for it, Andrews! Go over an' talk to her."

wanker — an insult.

well 'ard or hard — someone or something that is very tough, e.g. "She's well 'ard, I've 'eard."

wind up — to tease, to irritate, e.g. "Are you winding me up?"